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AUTHOR Katchen, Johanna E.
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ABSTRACT

The outline of a 2-hour-per-week public speaking course developed over the past 3 years for sophomore English language majors at National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan, is described. The course is built around rhetorical modes, with informative speaking (e.g., process and comparison/contrast), the focus of the first semester and persuasive speaking (e.g., cause/effect analysis and proposals), the focus of the second semester. Goals include: (1) helping university students gain more mature critical and argumentation skills, (2) teaching students how to organize material according to American rhetorical patterns, (3) advancing students' English language skills, and (4) developing students' nonverbal presentation skills. Rationale for the course outline is given, and evidence from studies in contrastive rhetoric is presented. In addition, suggestions for classroom activities are presented. (Author/DJD)

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A PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE FOR EFL

Johanna E. Katchen

Department of Foreign Languages
National Tsing Hua University
Hsinchu, Taiwan, R.O.C.

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ABSTRACT

Public speaking is often a required course for English language majors in non-English speaking countries. In Taiwan, where there is a big emphasis on public speaking skills in both Mandarin Chinese and English, two semesters of English Speech is a Ministry of Education requirement for all English majors. Unfortunately, the few texts available are all written for native speakers and are unsuitable for our students, both in language level and cultural assumptions.

To help remedy this situation, this paper presents an outline of a two-hour-a-week public speaking course developed in the past three years for sophomore English language majors at National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan. The course is built around rhetorical modes, with informative speaking (e.g. process, comparison/contrast) the focus of the first semester, persuasive speaking (e.g. cause/effect analysis, proposals) the focus of the second semester. Goals include 1) helping university students gain more mature critical and argumentation skills, 2) teaching students how to organize material according to American rhetorical patterns, 3) advancing students' English language skills, and 4) developing students' presentation skills (e.g. nonverbal).

Rationale for the course outline is given, citing evidence from studies in contrastive rhetoric. In addition, suggestions for classroom use of activities are also presented.

Introduction and Background

Every year in the Republic of China we have countless speech contests and debates. One of the newsworthy events of spring 1988 was the debate between students from the Republic of China and students from Mainland China in Singapore; this event marked the first time students faced each other in competition after forty years of separation. Less newsworthy are the numerous contests at each university, both in speaking Mandarin and in speaking English. For English speech, the event of the year is the islandwide speech contest held at and by the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the prestige of participating in and winning one of the top prizes in the islandwide contest, the regard for good English speaking skills is evidenced by the Ministry of Education ruling that all university English language majors are required to take and pass two semesters of English Speech. Certainly with all this interest in public speaking in English, we teachers, too, can develop ways to make the English Speech course more interesting and profitable for our students.

When I arrived at National Tsing Hua University four years ago, I was told that since I was a native speaker of English, one of the courses I would be teaching would be English Speech, essentially Public Speaking. I found, unfortunately, that the few public speaking texts available were grossly inadequate for my students, mainly because they were written for native speakers of English. Although I myself could use them for a little background, they had three major drawbacks as EFL texts. First, the language level was too high; words and phrases specific to

the American context were sometimes used. The level and style of writing was often beyond the level of our students. For example, the idea so effectively expressed with a metaphor for a native speaker would be better expressed more directly and straightforwardly for EFL students.

Second, and more importantly, these texts were loaded with American cultural assumptions, such as references to the tradition and role of free speech and citizen participation in a democracy and references to American history--background that could not be assumed for students in Taiwan. Third, and less obvious, were assumptions made about the collection, organization, and presentation of material. That is, the texts assumed prior knowledge of, or at least exposure to, American or western forms of rhetorical organization. Our students are not necessarily familiar with these same forms of organization. Furthermore, the texts were <u>about</u> public speaking: they did contain some very good discussions of audience analysis, motivation, needs, nonverbal behavior, and so on, but they gave little direction on exactly how to go about putting a speech together. They presented very little in the way of background and assignments for preparing and delivering specific types of speeches. Our students need this basic instruction before we can go on about the details of voice quality or audience needs. Sometimes suggested assignments were appropriate to the American setting but not the Taiwan setting.

Consequently, I found myself reverting to units I had used before in teaching ESL composition at a high intermediate/low

advanced level in an intensive program in the United States, in which we coordinated the composition and public speaking components (see Katchen, 1987). Fortunately, I had had that experience with ESL public speaking and ESL composition at the essay level and had spent two years as a teaching assistant/instructor for freshman English composition for native speakers of English. Both the ESL and native speaker programs used rhetorical modes (e.g. process, comparison/contrast, cause/effect) as the organizing patterns for the courses, and, since that was what I was most familiar with, I used them in organizing my English speech class and I have continued to do so as I have developed my course more fully.

This paper presents a summary of the course English Speech as it is now taught at National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan, R.O.C. First, rationale for structuring the course according to rhetorical modes of organization is given, followed by an outline of the course content. Next, a discussion of the evaluation procedures used in the course is presented. Finally, concluding remarks are made.

Rationale

As it is now taught, the course English Speech has four objectives: 1) to help university students gain more mature critical and argumentation skills; 2) to teach students how to organize material according to American rhetorical patterns; 3) to advance students´ English language skills (verbal); and 4) to develop students´ presentation skills (nonverbal). Surely for English language majors, advancement of English language

skills is a proper goal for any English class. Similarly, in a speech class, we expect presentation skills, including the nonverbal, to be one of the focal points of the class. The objectives also include argumentation and rhetorical organization, skills often taught in the writing class, but included also in the speech class to supplement the writing classes for the following reasons.

First of all, research has shown that different cultures have different preferred ways of organizing information and argumentation (Kaplan, 1966; many others). Thus the eight-legged essay expected of candidates for future government service in older Chinese times (Cheng, 1982) is not an appropriate form for the presentation of research results at a scientific symposium in the West today. The teacher cannot expect the Chinese and the American patterns of organization to be identical, although just what the exact differences are are still a matter of debate (for example, Lin, 1987; Kuo & Tsun, 1987).

Our students are English majors; after graduation, most will either work with or for Americans or other westerners in Taiwan or go to the United States or other western countries for work or further study. Students therefore need to know what argumentation patterns westerners will use and expect them to use, whether in preparing company reports or seminar papers. The rhetorical organization must be presented and explained clearly, because students may have had little practice using the structure, or the structure may be different or not exist in their native language. Even native speakers of English are

taught rhetorical structures in university English courses because, although they have been exposed to the structures, they need practice producing them on their own. Then how much more practice the speaker of English as a foreign language needs.

Teachers often say that students can't think. Composition teachers especially complain that their students never seem to have anything to write about. Indeed, Chinese students come from a system in which they have had to copy and memorize, from a tradition in which one learns to write well by copying the works of good writers. Isn't it then the teacher's job to show students how to find something to write or talk about and how to develop it? This problem is not unique to Taiwan. American university teachers of freshman composition for native speakers often have the same complaint, that freshmen can't think. Hasn't that always been the ideal role of the university--to teach one how to think so one goes on learning after graduation?

Teaching students to analyze a problem, look for its causes, and propose reasonable solutions, even if it is with a western structure, is one way to prepare them--future adult citizens--for participation in society. Especially in Chinese society, where a high value is still placed on the educated person, the university students of today will indeed be the leaders of tomorrow.

Outline of Course Content

English Speech is a four-credit unit (two units each semester) two-semester course required by the Ministry of Education for English language majors in Taiwan. It meets during the sophomore year once a week in a two-hour block. A typical

semester has between thirteen and fifteen class meetings (taking holidays into account). As class size is large (22 students), there is usually only time for each student to deliver four speeches each semester, and that is often rushed. Basically, we work on informative speaking the first semester and persuasive speaking the second semester. The types of speeches are shown below.

First Semester	Second Semester
Introductory Informative Speech	Persuasive Speech
Process Speech	Cause/Effect Speech
Comparison/Contrast Speech (videotaped)	Problem/Solution Speech (videotaped)
Extemporaneous Speech	Debates
	Extemporaneous Speech (time permitting)

The first class period of the first semester is spent giving the students some background on the principles of public speaking. For example, we talk about the relationship of the speaker to the topic, the audience, the purpose, and so on. The introductory informative speech is just that--the first speech the students give. Basically, the assignment is tell us about something, such a specific activity you did on your summer vacation. The speech should be three to five minutes in length but, since some students are more fluent than others, appropriate content, organization, and supporting evidence are more important than the actual length of time of a speech. The purpose of the

first assignment is to get the students speaking as soon as possible and to give them the experience of making a speech. The assignment is simple because during the first few classes, we are still spending part of the class giving students background on the speech making process. For example, we spend time on brainstorming--thinking of a topic and the many possible ways to develop it. We look at the elements of good introductions and conclusions. We make outlines.

Finally, we talk about the structure of the body of the speech, and the first example is the process speech. Students are given a few process essays to read for homework and analyze for structure. Because a process generally follows a chronological order, we work on useful transitions. The assignment is either show us how to do something or show us how something is done. Plenty of examples are given in class, and students choose their own topics. Students are encouraged to choose something they know how to do, such as a process involved in a hobby, and share it with the class. Past topics included How to clean a trumpet, in which the student actually cleaned the trumpet in front of us; How to do Chinese paper cutting, in which we were shown the complete process with the finished product for each step pre-prepared; and How to wash a dirty dog, in which there was no dog, but the young man gave a very humorous speech that included everything that could go wrong. The process assignment is one that both students and teacher enjoy as the audience because of the variety of original topics.

In the process speech especially, students have the opportunity to work with visuals. They are given some guiding

comments in the preparation lecture, but, more importantly, they find out themselves what happens if someone writes on the board and then stands in front of it, if their materials are not large enough for the audience to see, and so on. Some students come up with creative solutions to such problems, as the who showed us a card game by previously putting strips of tape on the blackboard and sticking the cards to the tape so all of us could see. We all learn from the student´s effective or ineffective use of visuals; we can then discuss how we could solve a particular technical problem with visuals or, occasionally, with sound.

In the preparation for the comparison/contrast speech, we learn about the part-to-part and the whole-to-whole structures. Students are assigned to compare two things or the same thing at two different times. The use of description is important. Because this speech is videotaped (for more about videotaping, see the section on evaluation procedures), the week before the taping we have a workshop session to ensure the students are following the assignment and are developing the topic adequately. Students bring their topics and outlines and discuss each other´s topic in groups of three or four while the teacher circulates around the room discussing each student´s proposed speech with him and acting the devil´s advocate. Students do give each other ideas; students find the workshop extremely useful.

Students also need practice in speaking on a topic with very little preparation--the extemporaneous speech. Students are encouraged to organize their speeches the way we have been organizing prepared speeches: support your argument with two or

three main points plus examples and have a brief introduction and conclusion. Each student chooses a card from a group of cards placed upside-down; on each card there is a different topic, such as How would you solve the traffic problems in Taipei? or Should the law requiring compulsory military service be changed? or Do mothers who work outside the home neglect their children? Generally, students seem to be able to talk about current social issues or interpersonal relationships, such as love and marriage.

After the student chooses a topic card, she has approximately ten minutes to prepare outside the classroom; she may take a dictionary and make notes. Because each speech usually takes about two minutes, but there is no time limit, and we talk about it for a minute or two after the speech, this results in having four students outside the classroom at any given time preparing. Once it gets going, before calling in the next speaker, we must remember to send another student out. It may sound confusing the first time, but it does work. If the classroom across the hall is not vacant, you can place a few chairs out in the hall for the students to use while preparing. In formal speech contests, students prepare in the same room while other speeches are being given, but for teaching purposes, students should be able to concentrate in a quiet place.

Similar to the first semester, in the second semester the first speech, the persuasive speech, is introductory. Students can choose to persuade us to do almost anything, from using Brand X shampoo to joining the folk dance club. Meanwhile, some portion of the first few classes is spent in talking about evidence, such as statistics, examples, and citing the testimony

of experts.

Preparation for the cause/effect speech includes examining logical fallacies and various kinds of causes, such as immediate and remote causes. The students' assignment is to investigate why comething may have come about.

Cause/effect analysis leads into the next assignment, the problem/solution speech. Students may first need to convince the audience that a problem exists and to show the causes of a problem before they can propose a solution. Students must show the feasibility of their solution, advantages and disadvantages, and superiority of their solution over other solutions. Because these speeches are also videotaped, a workshop session is held before the taping, and students have a chance to discuss their solutions with others and think them through more thoroughly.

Students are encouraged to choose topics on relevant social issues in Taiwan today and may work on the same topic for both the cause/effect and problem solution speeches. In Spring 1988 there were speeches on solving the problem of child abduction in Taiwan, implementing equal access for the handicapped on the National Tsing Hua University campus, and a proposal for a different emphasis on elective course requirements for foreign language majors at Tsing Hua, which was later submitted to the department chairman by the officers of the foreign language students association, most of whom were enrolled in our speech class at that time.

Debates give students a chance to use all their argumentation skills. In a class of twenty-two students, we have

three debates, two with two teams of four members, and one with two teams of three members. Students choose their own topics subject to the teacher's approval and their team must get together on their own time to prepare their arguments. In Spring 1988 students debated whether a mother should work outside the home, the advantages/disadvantages of the custom of the dowry, and the advantages/disadvantages of premarital sex. After each member presents her argument, she is asked a question by a member of the other team. Here the student must use extemporeanous speaking skills to answer the question to the questioner's satisfaction. A member of the audience acts as timekeeper. Our timed debates take a little over an hour, so only one is scheduled per two-hour class period. The time left over, after other business is gotten out of the way, may be used to have members of that day's audience give extemporaneous speeches. On evaluation forms given at the end of Spring Semester 1988, students rated problem/solution speeches and debates as the assignments they most enjoyed preparing and listening to.

Evaluation Procedures

In the course English Speech, students are evaluated in several ways. First, after each speech is given, the teacher and students spend about five minutes discussing the speech. If the speech was very well done, what made it so good? If a speech was poor, what factors made it so poor and how could it have been improved? Often parts of the speech suggest teaching points. For example, what are some other ways to develop the topic or organize the content? Can the tone be changed from serious to

humorous? It is important to get students to see alternate ways of developing and delivering a given topic so that they may have more flexibility in their own argumentation.

While a speech is being given, the teacher jots down comments on an evaluation sheet (see sample evaluation sheets in the Appendix). It is designed to reflect the goals of the course: 50% on content and organization and 50% on presentation, which includes a linguistic (30%) and a nonverbal (20%) section. Thus students who are not particularly fluent in spoken English can still receive a passing grade by preparing the content and organization part of the speech well. The evaluation sheets are slightly different for each speech, generally becoming more detailed to include points previously taught or structure/content necessary for a particular speech type. For example, feasibility of solution is a criterion of evaluation for a problem/solution speech.

It is difficult to make thorough comments on the evaluation sheet while a speech is being given. By the second hour of a two-hour class, our attention may wander, especially with a boring speech or a nonfluent student. And the interesting speech grabs our attention; we want to enjoy it, not spend the time writing. Therefore, I have found that recording each speech on a portable tape recorder is most useful. I make sure to make comments on nonverbal behavior while the speech is being given, but for other aspects of the speech, I can listen again at my own convenience and make more thorough comments on the evaluation sheet, listening several times if necessary. From these comments

the student's grade is tallied. During the next class, each student receives a copy of the evaluation sheet that includes my comments and the grade for the speech. In the past I had made a copy of the audio tape for students to listen to, but students did not find it so useful, so I have abandoned that idea for the present.

On the other hand, students show great interest in watching videotapes of their speeches. As the course runs now, we videotape only one set of speeches per semester, usually the next to the last, that is, the comparison/contrast speech in the first semester and the problem/solution speech in the second semester. It normally takes two classes to videotape twenty-two speeches. There are no comments by the teacher nor by students between speeches; these are reserved for the individual or small group sessions held evenings by appointment. At that time, teacher and student view the student's speech together and discuss it. These analyses are much more thorough than the usual in-class comments. Students say they enjoy these sessions; not only do they have a chance to see and hear themselves as others do, but they can discuss their progress more leisurely with the teacher. The evaluation sheet is still used, and the student gets a copy with comments and the grade on in the next class. (For a fuller discussion of the use of the video camera, see Katchen, 1989.)

Concluding Remarks

What has been presented above is only a brief summary of how National Tsing Hua University's course English Speech is now organized. Each time it is taught, it is modified in some way,

discarding or changing what did not work well before and trying out new ideas. Because I do not use a textbook, I have gathered materials from various sources: each year the stock of background readings and exercises gets larger. It is my goal to put all these ideas together eventually in book form.

So far we do not have any good commercially produced videotapes of speeches we can watch, but we can watch speeches given by other students that we videotaped in previous years. In studying rhetorical organization, we can look at a few short essays that use the pattern being taught. Since students write out their speeches before they give them (although I discourage word-for-word memorization) and are learning to use the same structures in the composition class, the extra reinforcement is useful. Students can see that the organization pattern is the same whether written or spoken.

I occasionally give the students some exercises for homework, such as work with introductions or conclusions or on transitions. Beyond that, there is really no time for detailed grammar work; that is done in the composition class. We try to spend as much time as possible in student speaking activities.

The general guidelines for a speech are three to five minutes, but we do not time the speeches (with the exception of the debates). A speech should not be so short that it is inadequately developed or supported. Some speeches may run closer to ten minutes, especially the process speeches, where the student may also be making something, or the speeches in the second semester, where more detailed argumentation is called for.

Those students who can speak comfortably at length in English can serve as models for the less fluent, less well-prepared students.

Although English Speech is a required course, it gives students a chance to talk about topics that interest them and to learn how to argue and present these issues more effectively, while using (and practicing) English as the medium of presentation. We have many objectives to meet, but we have two semesters to do it. Other speech courses have different time constraints and other variables. We hope that some of the ideas presented here may be useful to other EFL teachers of public speaking courses.

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